

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

SAJ-01 OMB-01 ACDA-05 IO-10 /081 W

----- 027787

R 121918Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0329

INFO USLO PEKING

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY MANILA

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CORRECTED COPY (:CORRECT TO ADD LINE EIGHT OF TEXT
PREVIOUSLY OMITTED)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, XD, XC

SUBJECT: FRENCH VIEWS ON INDOCHINA

BEGIN SUMMARY: ON JUNE 10 EMBOFF HAD PERIODIC TOUR
D'HORIZON ABOUT INDOCHINA WITH QUAI ACTING DIRECTOR FOR
ASIA, BOLLE. BOLLE SAID GOF WAS PUZZLED BY THE UNNATUR-
AL PROLONGATION OF THE CURRENT UNCLEAR SITUATION IN
SVN. WITH NO PRG FORMALLY INSTALLED IN SAIGON,
VIETNAMESE APPARENTLY OPPOSED ANY ELEVATION IN ANY
DIPLOMATIC ESTABLISHMENTS. GOF HENCE STILL NOT ABLE
TO INDICATE WHEN IT MIGHT BE ABLE TO PROTECT U.S.
INTERESTS. FRENCH STILL THOUGHT THERE WOULD BE AT
LEAST A FAÇADE OF AN INDEPENDENT PRG, ALTHOUGH GOF
AMBASSADOR IN HANOI THOUGHT REUNIFICATION WOULD BE
SOON. THE NEW VIETNAMESE SITUATION WAS CAUSING
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REPERCUSSIONS IN THE WHOLE AREA; GOF HOPED ASEAN WOULD

RECOVER ITS COHESION. GOF THINKS THAT A NATIONALIST BRAND OF COMMUNISM WILL WIN OUT IN LAOS OVER A VIETNAMESE VERSION BECAUSE OF PRC ENCOURAGEMENT OF NATIONALIST FORCES. END SUMMARY

SOUTH VIETNAM:

1. BOLLE SAID THAT THE SITUATION IN SAIGON HAD NOT BASICALLY MUCH CHANGED IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS. THE SITUATION WAS STILL NOT CLEAR AND THE ABSENCE OF A GOVERNMENT WAS BEING UNNATURALLY PROLONGED.

2. BOLLE NOTED THAT MERILLON, WHO HAD JUST RETURNED, HAD BEEN WITHDRAWN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GOF/PRG AGREEMENT OF 14 MAY; CONTRARY TO SOME REPORTS THE FRENCH WERE THE ONES WHO HAD WISHED HIM TO LEAVE EARLIER, AND THE PRG HAD DELAYED HIS DEPARTURE BECAUSE OF THE ABSENCE OF SUITABLE TRANSPORTATION. BOLLE NOTED THAT EVEN COMMUNIST AND THIRD WORLD AMBASSADORS PREVIOUSLY ACCREDITED TO THE PRG, WHO ATTENDED THE MAY 15 OR JUNE 6 CELEBRATIONS, STAYED ONLY 48 HOURS. HENCE, EVEN SUCH AMBASSADORS WERE NOT PERMITTED TO ESTABLISH THEMSELVES IN SAIGON. BOLLE SAID THE QUAI HAD NOW COME TO CONCLUSION THAT THE REASON FOR WHICH THE PRG WAS NOT PERMITTING THE FRENCH "CHARGE" HURIET TO PROCEED TO SAIGON FROM HANOI, WAS THAT THEY FEARED A PRECEDENT. IF HURIET WERE TO ESTABLISH HIMSELF IN SAIGON WITH PRG APPROVAL, THEN IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR THE PRG TO BLOCK THE ARRIVAL OF AMBASSADORS AND/OR CHARGES FROM A NUMBER OF OTHER COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY THOSE OF THE BLOC. BOLLE SAID THEY WERE CONFUSED ABOUT WHETHER IT WAS THE DRV OR PRG WHICH OPPOSED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIONS IN SVN.

3. BOLLE SAID THAT THE PRG HAD STILL NOT BEEN "FORMED"; THE JUNE 6 ANNIVERSARY HAD BEEN MERELY THE OCCASION FOR THE "PRESENTATION" OF SOME OF THE MINISTERS, WITH NO CLEAR INDICATION THAT THE GOVERNMENT WHEN FORMED WOULD NECESSARILY HAVE THE SAME MEMBERS. BOLLE ALSO NOTED THAT FRENCH EMBASSY PERSONNEL HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO SEE GOVERNMENT MEMBERS WHEN THEY WERE IN SAIGON

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BUT HAD CONTACT ONLY WITH THE CHIEF OF THE EXTERNAL RELATIONS SECTION OF THE MILITARY COMMITTEE GOVERNING SAIGON. IN SEARCHING FOR REASONS FOR THE UNNATURAL PROLONGATION OF THE CURRENT ABNORMAL SITUATION, THE FRENCH WERE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE PRG AND THE DRV. HANOI MAY NOT BE IN A HURRY TO SEE A GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHED IN SAIGON BECAUSE IT CONSIDERS THE LOCAL MILITARY COMMITTEES EASIER TO

CONTROL. THE PRG APPEARED TO BE UNHAPPY THAT THE NORTH'S HOLD OVER THE SOUTH WAS BECOMING STRONGER AND STRONGER. THIS DISCONTENT COULD EXPLAIN MME. BINH'S TRIP TO MOSCOW AND ALGIERS AS AN EFFORT TO OBTAIN FOREIGN SUPPORT FOR THE PRG IN ITS ARGUMENTS WITH THE DRV.

4. BOLLE SAID THAT IT WAS CLEAR TO THE FRENCH THAT THE PRC DOES NOT WISH TO SEE VIETNAM UNITED SOON. IT NOW SEEMED THAT THE USSR SHARES THE DESIRE FOR A LONG

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

SAJ-01 OMB-01 ACDA-05 IO-10 /081 W

----- 019852

R 121918Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0330

INFO USLO PEKING

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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PERIOD OF SVN INDEPENDENCE. BOLLE NOTED THAT DESPITE THE OBVIOUS UNIFICATION AT THE LEVEL OF THE PARTY, IDEOLOGY AND THE DEFENSE STRUCTURE, OTHER ASPECTS OF UNIFICATION MIGHT BE ACCOMPLISHED MORE SLOWLY, BY PROGRESSIVE STEPS. THE PRG OFFICIALS HERE HAD NOTED

THAT THE PASSAGE TO SOCIALISM WOULD NOT BE EASY IN
SAIGON AND THE DELTA. TO AVOID POPULAR DISSATISFACTION,
THE PRG APPEARED TO WISH MORE GRADUAL SOCIAL EVOLUTION
IN THE SOUTH THAN WAS TAKING PLACE IN THE NORTH. THE
GOF ALSO THOUGHT THAT THE DRV MIGHT FIND IT USEFUL TO
HAVE A PRG ALSO IN EXISTENCE TO FACILITATE SOME OF THE
VIETNAMESE CONTACTS WITH FOREIGN COUNTRIES PARTICULARLY
THE NONALIGNED. THE HEAD OF THE PRG PERMANENT MISSION
IN PARIS, PHAM VAN BA HAD EXPLAINED THE VIETNAM SITUATION
AS FOLLOWS: ONE NATION, A SINGLE PEOPLE, TWO
GOVERNMENTS, A SEPARATE PRG FOREIGN POLICY ARRIVED AT
AFTER LIAISON WITH THE DRV.

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5. BOLLE NOTED THAT UNTIL AN EFFECTIVE PRG WERE REALLY ESTABLISHED, THE GOF DID NOT BELIEVE IT COULD FUNCTION AS A PROTECTING POWER FOR U.S. INTERESTS. THE GOF AT THE MOMENT COULD ENVISAGE NO END TO THE ANOMALOUS SITUATION SINCE THEY DID NOT KNOW ITS CAUSE. BOLLE NOTED THAT THERE WAS STILL NO MAIL OR POUCH COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN PARIS AND SAIGON; THE ONLY CONTACTS BETWEEN THE QUAI AND THE FRENCH EMBASSY ARE BY RADIO.

6. BOLLE NOTED THAT OF THE APPROXIMATELY 10,000 FRENCH CITIZENS IN SVN, ONLY 2,000 ARE FROM METROPOLITAN FRANCE, THE OTHER 8,000 WERE ORIGINALLY FROM INDOCHINA. ALTHOUGH MANY OF THE LATTER GROUP MAY HAVE RENOUNCED VN NATIONALITY, IT IS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THE PRG WILL LONG ACCEPT SUCH A RENUNCIATION. TO DATE IN ANY CASE THE PRG HAS NOT YET CONTESTED THE FRENCH NATIONALITY EVEN OF THOSE WHO MAY BE DUAL NATIONALS.

NVN:

7. ACCORDING TO BOLLE, THE GOF WAS SOMEWHAT SURPRISED THAT THE NEW LEGISLATURE HAD CONFIRMED THE EXECUTIVE POSITIONS OF ALL THE "OLD GUARD", WHO STILL CONTROLLED THE PARTY AS WELL. HOWEVER, THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH HAD BEEN REGUENATED AS A RESULT OF THE ELECTIONS. BOLLE SAID THAT IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE REASON FOR NOT INTRODUCING NEW BLOOD INTO THE EXECUTIVE NOW WAS THE DESIRE TO HOLD OFF ON SUCH A MAJOR SHIFT UNTIL A GOVERNMENT OF A UNIFIED VN WOULD BE FORMED. BOLLE NOTED IN THIS RESPECT, THAT THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN HANOI WAS CONVINCED THAT THE DRV INTENDED TO ESTABLISH VERY QUICKLY A SINGLE GOVERNMENT OVER THE ENTIRE COUNTRY AS THEY HAD ALREADY ESTABLISHED A SINGLE PARTY AND MILITARY STRUCTURE. BOLLE COMMENTED THAT THIS WAS A "NORMAL" POSITION FOR AN AMBASSADOR TO HANOI TO TAKE SINCE HE WOULD THEN BECOME AMBASSADOR TO A MUCH LARGER

COUNTRY. BOLLE SAID THAT HE DID NOT AGREE WITH THIS CONCLUSION OF THE AMBASSADOR.

8. BOLLE THOUGHT THAT ON MANY LEVELS, ONE SHOULD
CONSIDER THAT VN WAS NOW FUNCTIONING AS A SINGLE NATION
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OF 40 MILLION PEOPLE. SUCH A CHANGE OBVIOUSLY CREATED
A CONSIDERABLE WAVE IN THE WHOLE SEA AREA. IT WAS
STILL TOO SOON TO KNOW WHAT THE EFFECT WOULD BE ON THE
OTHER NATIONS ON THE PENINSULA AND IN THE AREA, BUT IT
WAS PERHAPS ILLUSTRATIVE THAT THE REACTION OF THE ASEAN

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

SAJ-01 OMB-01 ACDA-05 IO-10 /081 W
----- 019863

R 121918Z JUN 75
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0331
INFO USLO PEKING
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
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COUNTRIES HAD BEEN A BASIC DIVISION IN THEIR RECENT MEETING. SOME COUNTRIES WISHED REASSURANCES OF U.S. SUPPORT, WHILE OTHERS SEEKED A DIFFERENT ROUTE TO SECURITY THROUGH CONTACTS WITH THE COMMUNIST POWERS. FRANCE CONSIDERED IT NATURAL THAT ASEAN UNITY SHOULD HAVE BEEN SHAKEN BY THE INDOCHINA EVENTS, BUT THOUGHT THAT TIME WOULD DIMINISH THESE DIFFERENCES AND PERMIT A RETURN TO GREATER COHESION.

LAOS:

9. THE GOF HAD BEEN SOMEWHAT DISTRESSED BY THE EVOLUTION TOWARD WHAT SEEMED CLEARLY TO BE A COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT IN LAOS. THEY WERE GLAD THAT AT LEAST THE EVOLUTION HAD BEEN PROGRESSIVE AND PACIFIC. THE GOF THOUGHT THAT THE BRAND OF COMMUNISM WOULD BE BASICALLY NATIONALISTIC SINCE THE PRC WOULD BLOCK ANY DRV EFFORTS TO MAKE IT A VIETNAMESE COMMUNISM, AN EXTENSION

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OF HANOI'S CONTROL TO THE THAI FRONTIER. IT SEEMED CLEAR TO THE GOF THAT CHINA ENCOURAGES DIVERSITY IN INDOCHINA AND WISHES TO SLOW UP "TONKINESE EXPANSIONISM" HENCE THE GOF BELIEVES THAT THE PRC ROLE IN INDOCHINA IS BASICALLY A HELPFUL ONE AND SERVES THE INTERESTS OF THE PEOPLES IN THE AREA AS WELL AS OF COUNTRIES LIKE FRANCE WHICH WISH TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH EACH COUNTRY ON THE PENINSULA.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 JUN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975PARIS15228
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750206-0425
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750657/aaaabzjq.tel
Line Count: 310
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 14 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <14 MAY 2003 by MartinML>; APPROVED <01 OCT 2003 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FRENCH VIEWS ON INDOCHINA BEGIN SUMMARY: ON JUNE 10 EMBOFF HAD PERIODIC TOUR
TAGS: PFOR, XD, XC, FR, VS, (BOLLE)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006